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A Friday celebration to kickoff the Arizona State University's Sun Devil football season has created a platform for three high-profile candidates seeking political office to address a crowd at Wells Fargo Arena that is expected to swell to 1,000.

On Monday, the Tempe Chamber of Commerce announced that Sen. John McCain would be a guest speaker at the Sun Devil Kickoff Luncheon & Pep Rally. McCain's participation comes on the heels of a recent announcement that Gov. Jan Brewer is speaking at the 2-hour celebration.

Today, officials with the Tempe Chamber of Commerce, which is a co-organizer of the event, said that U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Tempe, has also been added as a speaker. The Sun Devil Club and ASU Alumni Association are co-organizers of the celebration.

Although the politicians could benefit from the face time with hundreds of voters, Sean Donovan, a Tempe Chamber of Commerce spokesman, said that the Sun Devil celebration would not be sidetracked by political posturing.

"This is an event that is apolitical. I think you're just looking at . . . people who represent the state at high levels and want to show their support for the Sun Devils," he said.

The chamber's past Sun Devil luncheons have not included political speakers. Chamber officials invited Brewer to speak after hearing that she was scheduled to speak at a University of Arizona event, Donovan said. Officials with McCain's office called the chamber Monday to ask if the senator could also speak, Donovan said.

The politicians' comments are being limited to five minutes.

Donovan and Cori Hewitson of the Sun Devil Club said they expected the politicians' remarks to focus on support for the Sun Devil team.

Officials with the Arizona Democratic Party criticized Brewer's appearance at the ASU event.

"It's a puzzling choice since Governor Brewer has done so much damage to higher education. Her speech to students and faculty ought to include an apology," said Jennifer Johnson, a Democratic Party spokeswoman.

Paul Senseman, a Brewer spokesman, countered that criticism, saying the governor has shown support for Arizona universities.

"The state Democratic Party . . . will say anything in desperation," he said. "I think the reason Gov. Brewer accepted the invitation of both ASU and of the UofA team on Saturday, for a similar event, is because . . . she's been a fan of our university systems for years. For a specific example, they only need look at Prop. 100, to see she showed with demonstrative action, support of our university systems."

Proposition 100, a temporary 1-cent-per-dollar increase in the state sales tax, was supported by Brewer and approved by voters. The measure included funding for K-12 and higher education.

A spokesman for Mitchell said the congressman was attending this year's luncheon as he has in years past. Monday afternoon the chamber invited Mitchell to speak, Mitchell spokesman Robbie Sherwood said.

"The congressman didn't just go to college at ASU, he went to elementary school at ASU. He bleeds maroon and gold," Sherwood said. "Any comments he makes will be focused on supporting the football program and the university to build up enthusiasm and support for the upcoming season."

This year's celebration grew when the venue was changed from Tempe Mission Palms and a pep rally portion was added to the luncheon, which is a fundraiser for the Tempe Chamber of Commerce.

In past years, the luncheon included ASU athletics officials and Sun Devil football players and coaches. The Sun Devil Club, a fundraising arm within the ASU Athletics Department that raises scholarships for student athletes, had hosted a separate fundraiser in past years, but this year partnered with the chamber and ASU Alumni Association to host Friday's celebration.

This year's Sun Devil kickoff is aimed at including more people from the ASU community and general public, said Hewitson of the Sun Devil Club.

Friday's program includes appearances by head football coach Dennis Erickson, ASU Athletics Director Lisa Love and question-and-answer session with ASU football players. ASU's marching band, spirit squad and mascot Sparky would lead a pep rally.

ASU students, faculty and staff with Sun Card can sit in the general admission arena seating for free.

The public can purchase \$10 tickets at the stadium for arena seating. Tickets for the luncheon, which has floor seating, range from \$60 for an individual to \$700 for a table of nine guests who get seated with an ASU football coach or player.

The money raised from the \$10 tickets benefits the Sun Devil Club, while money raised from the luncheon benefits the Tempe Chamber of Commerce.

Luncheon ticket information: www.tempechamber.org.